

REMARKS

The Examiner's Office Action of May 28, 2003 has been received and its contents reviewed. Applicants would like to thank the Examiner for the consideration given to the above-identified application.

Claims 1-20 are pending, of which claims 1, 5, 8, 12, 16 and 18 are independent. Claims 5-18 have been withdrawn from consideration in the Response to Restriction/Election Requirement filed September 30, 2002.

Referring now to the detailed Office Action, claims 1-4 and 19-20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Jain et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,180,533 B1 - hereinafter Jain) in view of Koshimizu et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,426,477 - hereinafter Koshimizu).

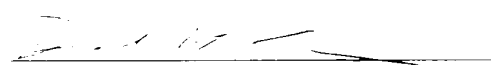
In response to the sole §103(a) rejection, Applicants respectfully submit that the filing date of the cited Koshimizu reference is September 12, 2000. However, the priority date of the present invention, which is based on Japanese patent application number 2000-117502, is April 19, 2000. Moreover, the features of claim 1, as well as of dependent claims 2-4 and 19, and claim 20, are disclosed in the priority Japanese patent application 2000-117502. Hence, the Koshimizu reference is predated by the present application and does not qualify as a prior art reference.

Applicants are submitting herewith a verified English translation of the Japanese patent application 2000-117502 so as to perfect the claimed priority date.

In view of the arguments set forth above, Applicants respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of all the pending §103(a) rejection.

While the present application is now believed to be in condition for allowance, should the Examiner find some issue to remain unresolved, or should any new issues arise, which could be eliminated through discussions with Applicants' representative, then the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone in order that the further prosecution of this application can thereby be expedited.

Respectfully submitted,


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